

THOMAS. (T. GAILLARD.)

A EULOGY UPON  
Cornelius Rea Agnew,

READ BEFORE THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE,

BY

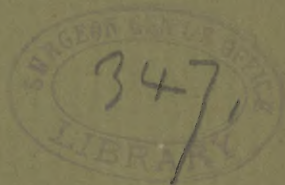
T. Gaillard Thomas, M.D.

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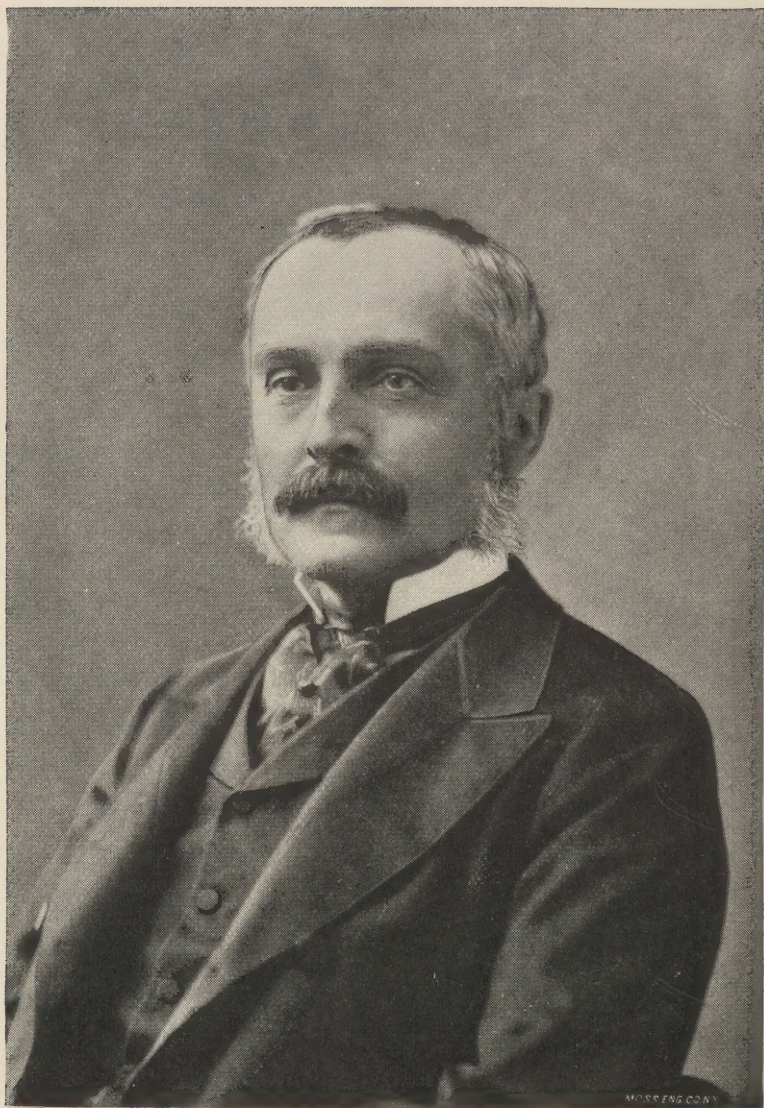
JUNE 7TH, 1888.











C. B. Krum

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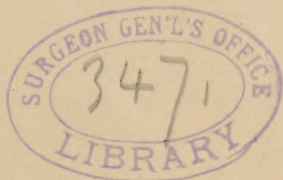
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IN the days of old when Eadwine, the Saxon, ruled England, a convention was held for the settlement of certain points connected with the established religion of his realm. The problem of life coming under consideration, the chief of his Ealdormen, or councillors, stood forth, and said; "So seems the life of man, O king, as a sparrow's flight through the hall, when a man is sitting at meat in winter-tide with the warm fire lighted on the hearth, but the chill rain storm without. The sparrow flies in at one door, and tarries for a moment in the light and heat of the hearth fire, and then flying forth from the other, vanishes into the wintry darkness whence it came. So tarries for a moment the life of man in our sight, but what is before it, what after it, we know not."

Long before and ever since those ancient days, men have indulged in speculations, inquiries and investigations concerning that pilgrimage, which leads from the cradle to the grave, entitled, "Life." Sages, scholars and philosophers have, without ceasing, sought to know its origin, its object and its end. But thus far in spite of all efforts at elucidation, like the Ealdorman of old, we are forced to say, "So tarries for a moment the life of man in our sight, but what is before it, what after it, we know not."

A generation may be likened to a caravan, which crosses a vast and arid desert, every member of which must surely fall exhausted by the way before the goal is reached, and leave his bones to whiten on the sands. As the doomed procession advances, one falls overcome by the heat of the sun; another exhausted from fatigue; another succumbs to hunger and thirst; another to disease contracted by exposure; while others still fall victims to strife and contention with the wild tribes which hover along the route. In time, all must die; some when everything is prosperous, and the journey young; some midway in the march; and some after bearing the burden, the trials, and the sorrows of the expedition, and after all their fellow travellers have fallen beside them. But fall when they may, all must die.

What more natural than that their surviving comrades should study and consider the traits of character, the mental and physical attributes and the peculiar habits of each departing friend, in order that what was good in him might be copied, and that what was evil might be eschewed. Surely, to us, no custom can be fraught with greater promise of good than that which leads us thus to analyze the lives and characters of those who leave our ranks to take their places in those of another world.

How much the world has lost from neglect of this custom can never be known ; but surely the loss must have been very great ; for every life, for good or ill, leaves behind it "footprints in the sands of time." Posterity may reap a rich harvest from such records, for the full appreciation of our fellow men is not, to our faulty natures, possible at the time and period of their existence. As a prophet is not without honor save in his own country and among his own kindred, so is the real and just appreciation of the man, great by reason of some quality or qualities, which elevate him above his compeers, not possible by those who live in immediate contact with him and his surroundings. The reputed son of the Jewish carpenter was that and nothing more to the natives of the town of Nazareth, and his death upon Calvary, to the whole communities of Judea and of Rome, was nothing more than the execution of a wild enthusiast. Yet the whole of Christendom to-day owns that so-called enthusiast as a God !

The life, the labors and the death of Socrates, were to his contemporaries unimportant as matters relating only to an erratic, eccentric, old Greek, whose career was a failure, and whose end would be oblivion. And yet the verdict of the ages has been that that eccentric old Greek was, with the single exception of Shakespeare, the most remarkable intellect that has left its impress upon the annals of literature.

Think you not that heroes and acts of pure heroism are to be found in the slums of every great city, equal to the men and the deeds which have been made immortal in story and in song ; that characters no less grand than those which adorn the pages of history are daily and hourly fading away from our midst, without notice or record ; and that glorious examples of self-



sacrifice and devotion are being constantly lost to the world ?

Within the last two decades, how rapidly have our brethren fallen, how frequent have been the opportunities offered for analysis of character and study of life such as I offer you to-night.

Of those who had grown gray in labor, and have gone to rest crowned with honor and sealed with respect, we recall with proud, loving remembrance, Delafield ; Parker ; Watson ; Alonzo Clark ; and that surgeon of the lion's heart, the eagle's eye, and the lady's hand, James R. Wood ; Marion-Sims ; Peaslee ; Anderson ; Flint ; Joseph Mather Smith ; Buck ; Krackowitzer ; and Van Buren, standing among his peers like a sturdy oak in a grand forest.

And then of those who have been cut down in the midst of their labors and in the morning of their usefulness, who will not gladly and affectionately bring back to memory the handsome face and manly form of the gifted George T. Elliot ; Bumstead ; Budd ; Thebaud ; Reynolds ; Griswold ; and Foster Swift, the humorous, amiable comrade, the very mention of whose name brings a pleasant smile to the memory.

These and others, the mention of whose names is denied me by the necessity of brevity, have left us ; but left us in their going a rich legacy of loving remembrance, of pleasant memories, and of proud claim that they belonged to our noble guild ; that they were our colleagues in this world, and that they will be our brothers in the next !

Bring them back to memory, and what nobler list of faithful, self-sacrificing, upright men, could be made up from the ranks of any profession or class in any part of the world !

It is in accordance with this worthy and time honored practice, which we honor by meeting together to-night, that I strive to offer you a simple, just and truthful appreciation of one with whose nature an intimate association of over thirty years' duration should have rendered me thoroughly familiar. Simplicity, justice, and truth were the distinguishing features of the character of the man of whom I shall speak, and like unto his character shall be this essay which I read in commemoration of him.

Cornelius Rea Agnew was born in this city on the 8th of August, 1830. In him was combined the blood of France, of

Scotland, and of Ireland. About the year 1865, one of his paternal ancestors, a French Huguenot, driven from his home by the harsh and impolitic revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV., took up his abode in Ireland, and joined the Scotch Presbyterian church. In 1786, his grandfather, John Agnew, emigrated to this country, at first settling in Philadelphia, and subsequently removing to New York, where he engaged in the shipping and commission business. In this he was succeeded by his son William, the father of the subject of this essay, who married a lady of Scotch descent, Miss Elizabeth Thompson, and very soon assumed the position of one of the leading merchants of the metropolis.

The boyhood of Cornelius Agnew was spent in this city, where he attended school, and lived the ordinary life of a New York boy of the upper class. His home influences, however, were exceptionally good, for his father, trained by one coming direct from the land in which the strict religious observances of the Scotch Covenanters held powerful sway, had all through his life ranged himself upon the side of the most rigidly observant of all the Protestant churches of our country—the Presbyterian. Both the male and female heads of the household in which he lived were remarkable for earnest, consistent, and unostentatious piety. We all know how uncertain such influences are in their results, and how signally they sometimes fail in producing men worthy of them. But in the case of young Agnew, the seed which was sown fell upon soil peculiarly favorable for its germination, and he grew up from a highly moral boy, into a conscientious youth, and strictly religious man. I feel sure that I do not overstep the bounds of truth when I say that even from his early boyhood he was imbued with a deep religious principle which protected and shielded him in those temptations which beset the path of youth, and so often leave such terrible wounds and blighting cankers upon the character.

At the age of fifteen years he entered Columbia College, from which he was graduated in 1849. He then immediately began the study of medicine in the office of J. Kearney Rogers, at that time one of the most eminent physicians of this country, and a professor of Anatomy in the College of Physicians and Surgeons in this city. From the college just mentioned he received

the diploma of doctor of medicine, in the year 1852. He now became an interne of the New York Hospital, and at the expiration of his term of service, having determined to make a specialty of the diseases of the eye and ear, he received the appointment of Surgeon to the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary, a proviso being made that before entering upon the duties allotted to him he should first go to Europe and make himself familiar with the most recent advances which had been made in the department.

This appointment was one highly complimentary to a man as young as Agnew was at this time, and may be accepted as legitimate evidence of the esteem and respect in which he was already held by men older than himself in the profession. At that time the school of medicine of Dublin was in high repute, and as an oculist and aurist, the eccentric, but talented and original, Sir William Wilde, was attracting pupils from all parts of the world. To this city went Agnew, and it was there that I first met him, in the year 1854. Let me picture him to you as he then appeared; first because it is a pleasure to recall him in his youth and vigor, and second to show you how completely the youth of that time was the father of the man of later years.

Below the average height, and weighing not more than one hundred and twenty pounds, he possessed a perfectly formed figure—lithe, active, symmetrical, and capable of bearing great and prolonged effort. His features were extraordinarily handsome, his profile “clean cut,” his forehead broad, and his mouth expressive of signal decision and firmness. There is a peculiarly shaped head which a modern romance-writer has described as the “mediæval head,” which, while commonly seen in the paintings of Leonardo, Rubens, and other old masters, is rarely met with in life. His head belonged to this type; the facial angle almost rectangular, the temples protuberant, the whole head rotund and large in proportion to the body. As I looked upon him at that time, I often thought that had he been cast in a larger mould he would have been the handsomest man that I had ever seen; as it was, he presented a striking example of manly beauty.

His manners were wonderfully winning, and there was about him that indescribable something to which we cannot give a



name, which rendered him attractive to all, and fascinating to many, without the display of any effort or striving after effect on his part.

He came to Dublin an entire stranger, and took his place as comrade with some dozen American students called there by the same motives which had influenced his going. At that time, Dublin was to the native of the United States the symbol of open-handed hospitality, and we went freely into society. It was surprising and almost mortifying to see how Agnew outstripped us all in making friends, in attracting attention, and in creating a personal interest. I remember well a remark made about him by one of our circle as we were one day discussing him :—"If that man would cast his lot in diplomatic life, he would make his fortune ; his personal magnetism is so pronounced."

Of his character at this time I will merely say this : he was in a field which, and among a set of men who, offered opportunity, facility, and incentive for idleness and dissipation. Never once was he led astray in either direction. The former failing seemed foreign to his nature ; the latter impossible with the strict guard which he ever kept upon his life.

From Dublin he went to London and Paris, and after studying his proposed specialty there, returned to his home and began the practice of his profession.

Very soon after his return, in the year 1856, he married Mary, daughter of Lora Nash, a prominent merchant of this city ; a woman, in every attribute of mind and character, peculiarly suited to him ; who has ably seconded him in every effort of his noble career ; sustained and comforted ; and rendered his domestic life as perfectly happy a one as it is ever allotted to man to enjoy.

Dr. Agnew now entered upon his career as an oculist and aurist, and with that energy, perservance, and singleness of purpose which characterized him, devoted himself to his profession. In addition to this devotion, the peculiar personal gifts which I just now mentioned as characterizing the youth, began at once to show their influence upon the career of the man. His offices soon overflowed with patients ; a gratifying financial return rapidly marked his success ; the young oculist very soon began to be sought for as consultant by medical men throughout our

country ; and at the end of the first decade of his professional life, he was universally acknowledged as "*facile princeps*" in his department of medicine. This pre-eminent place he never lost, and although as years rolled by, younger men pressed hard upon him in honorable rivalry, I believe that I claim for him only what justice accords, when I assert that at his death he stood at the front of Ophthalmology in this country.

I have said that Agnew devoted himself with ardor to his professional work, and I have said truly. But all through his life a great deal of his time was given to public work, to charitable organizations, to the management of educational institutions, and to aiding religious enterprises. So numerous were the positions which he filled in connection with such enterprises that it is difficult even to enumerate them all, and when it is asserted that he scorned the holding of any sinecure in such relations, and that it was a rule of his life to fulfill every duty imposed by office with the strictest fidelity, it will be appreciated what a life of toil and incessant labor his sense of duty and desire of doing good imposed upon him. As we view his labors now, after he is at rest, we cannot but feel surprise that any man could have consented to endure them ; that anyone could have felt it his duty thus to have given himself up to the public weal, and the good of his fellow man. Fortunate is it for the world that such men are occasionally met with ; not only for the good which they directly accomplish, but also for the beautiful and forcible examples which they offer for the imitation of others !

During the term of office of Gov. E. D. Morgan, he was Surgeon General of the State of New York ; during the war, at great sacrifice of his practice, he was one of the organizers and probably the most active member of the United States Sanitary Commission ; and he with three others constituted the founders of the Union League Club, one of the most worthy and influential of the political organizations of our land. He was a Trustee of the Public Schools of this city ; one of the chief organizers of the School of Mines of Columbia College ; Secretary of the first Sanitary Reform Association ; and founder of the Manhattan Eye and Ear Hospital. He was Governor of the Woman's Hospital ; Trustee of Columbia College ; a Regent of the State

Hospital for the Insane at Poughkeepsie. He founded, and for many years conducted, a Clinic for Diseases of the Eye and Ear in the College of Physicians and Surgeons; was President of the Alumni Association of that College; was the originator of the Brooklyn Eye and Ear Hospital; and for a term President of the Medical Society of the State of New York. He was a Director of the New York Tract Society; a Director of the Young Men's Christian Association; Elder in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church; Trustee one of its Mission Churches; Trustee and Chairman of the Board of the Presbyterian Church of Palisades. He was appointed by President Arthur Indian Commissioner, and took a journey into the Indian country, to study these people in their homes, under the influence and nominal care of United States agents.

He brought home from that journey, an Indian in his blanket, who was nearly blind, subjected him to the cleansing and civilizing influences of the Manhattan Hospital; and, after some months, with the pecuniary contributions of friends, sent him home to the Indian Territory, a living, seeing apostle to his degraded kindred.

In addition to the labors connected with these official positions, he expended a great deal of energy and sympathy upon the education of the freedmen of the South, and the Indians, he being especially interested in the educational institution at Carlisle, Pa., which is now accomplishing so much for these people. While performing these duties, many of them of a non-professional character, he contributed largely and ably to medical literature, which has been deeply indebted to his pen for scientific articles of great value.

He was a member of the following societies:—The Medico-Chirurgical Society of Edinburgh, Scotland; New York Academy of Medicine; New York Pathological Society, which he aided in founding; International Ophthalmological Society; Medical and Surgical Society of New York City; American Ophthalmological Society, of which he was for several years President; American Otological Society; New York Ophthalmological Society, which he was instrumental in founding; International Otological Society; Medical Society of the County of New York; and New York Academy of Sciences.



With these public positions, professional and non-professional, on his hands, he conducted one of the largest private practises which New York has ever known ; and I think that I may with safety venture to assert, that his professional income has been rarely surpassed in the history of this city.

On the 9th of April, while, in consultation at the bedside of Mr. Roscoe Conkling, Dr. Agnew was taken with colicky pains in the abdomen, which rapidly became severe. At 3 P.M., he had a violent chill and an attack of emesis, the temperature rising a little. The face was anxious, the tongue coated, the anterior abdominal wall rigid, with tenderness over the entire abdomen. Dr. Delafield saw him and diagnosed perityphlitis of grave character. On the next day, he was seen in consultation by Drs. Sands and McBurney, and the question of laparotomy was carefully considered, but a decision adverse to it was arrived at. On the 11th, I was added to the consultation. At this time, general septic peritonitis existed, and the patient was so excessively weak that we all agreed that operative procedure would result in death on the operating table. On the 13th, however, he rallied to such an extent that we concluded to venture upon explorative incision. This was made by Dr. Sands, and an abscess was opened in the right iliac fossa, but it was quite clear that general septic peritonitis existed, and that the issue of the case would undoubtedly be a fatal one.

Of the progress of the case from this time to the afternoon of the 18th, I need not relate you the sad story. It is the ordinary one of progressive septic peritonitis, with its steady depreciation of strength and increasing nervous exhaustion.

During his illness I was by his bedside a great deal. Out of the many death scenes which it has been my lot to witness, never have I met with one more calm, more dignified, more simple than his. There was no emotion, no fear, no apparent regret. All was quiet, unostentatious and natural, in the bearing of the dying man. The description of the death of Socrates has passed into classic literature on account of the calmness and serenity which marked that great man's exit. It was no calmer, no more serene than Agnew's ! Socrates died like a philosopher ; Agnew died like a Christian !

He had several short interviews with his pastor, and in one

of the last of these, after a simple statement of his faith in the saving power of Christ, he quoted in conclusion the following passage from the Bible: "I know whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

So soon as he learned of the nature of his malady and of its almost certain termination, he made his will, appointing as his executors his wife, his eldest daughter, and his son; and like a careful man preparing for a long journey and temporary separation from those he loved, he made him ready for death.

One day when the end was near at hand, as I sat beside him as he dozed, he turned suddenly and said, "I am not familiar with the approach of death from septic peritonitis; tell me, you who have so often seen it in your specialty, how does it occur?" I pictured to him what he desired; adding that it would surely be painless in the end, that until very near the termination the intellect would remain clear, and that gradually coma, like an artificial anæsthesia, would shut out the closing scenes from the cognizance of the sufferer. "That's very gratifying," he said, and closed his eyes again. At nine o'clock on the evening before the day of his death, I sat bedside him as he slept lightly. After fifteen minutes' stay, I rose to leave him, and gently took his hand for a final grasp, with the intention of leaving him without disturbing his sleep. But awaking, he asked, "Are you going?" "Yes," said I, "good night!" "Don't go just yet," he said. Then he changed the grasp of my hand, taking it entirely within his own, looked steadily in my face for a full minute, and said in a cheery voice, "Good-bye, old fellow!" and closed his eyes again. He said no other word, yet his silence and warm hand grasp said as plainly as words could have done, that he knew full well that that greeting was the last which we should exchange in this world. In twelve hours I stood by his bedside again, but coma had cast its benign shadow over the hitherto clear intellect, and death was fast claiming the exhausted frame as its own. At 2:45 on that day, surrounded by all those who were dearest to him, he died as calmly as one usually falls asleep.

At that instant, there passed from earth one of the purest, gentlest, most manly spirits, that has ever graced it by its pre-

sence. A good citizen, honored and beloved by thousands of his countrymen, then went to his rest ; a true Christian exchanged, in the twinkling of an eye, the garb of mortality for that of immortality ; a great physician laid down his heavy task, and, from all labor free, began that new life for which his whole existence here had been fitting him.

Two days before his death, Agnew left with Dr. Delafield the request that Dr. Prudden should make a post-mortem examination of his body ; in order, as he said, that the ends of science might be advanced in reference to the management of similar cases. This revealed that condition which has from the beginning of the world filled so many graves, left so many vacant seats at the social board, and desolated so many hearthstones ; perforation of the appendix vermiformis, and resulting septic peritonitis, with its usual events, plastic and purulent deposits. A solution of continuity, being gradually effected by ulceration, was consummated on the morning of April 9th, in the sick room of Mr. Conkling. The severe pain which suddenly seized him there, was caused by slight escape of the contents of the intestines, and the usual secondary results developed themselves rapidly and surely, as the fateful malady, peritonitis, marched steadily on to its end.

On the 21st day of April, three days after death, the body of our colleague was laid in the cemetery of Greenwood, with the simple but impressive ceremonies of the Presbyterian church. His funeral was to the last degree simple, chaste, and solemn ; simple, in the absence of all show and parade ; chaste, in its refinement and perfection of arrangement ; and solemn, in the universal display of grief, so real, and so general that it pervaded the entire assemblage. The spacious church presided over by the Rev. Dr. Hall, was filled to overflowing with a collection of people of which an emperor might have been proud. Lawyers ; clergymen ; doctors ; busy merchants ; brokers, chary of time ; fashionable women ; men of society ; filled the body of the church, the galleries, and the aisles. To his friends, this must have been most gratifying, but could he who lay encoffined there have surveyed that gathering, what would most have gratified him would have been the great representation of the poor, who seemed with one accord to have left their humble homes,



and to have ventured into the limits of wealth and fashion to do honor to the dead whose life had earned their love and gratitude. An ever open avenue to the heart which now lay still within that coffin had been poverty ; and now poverty sent forth her children to take a last farewell of him who in life had held her in grateful sympathy. The key which ever opened the way to his kindly aid and attention had inscribed upon it three words ; trouble, sorrow, suffering. And now those from whose lives he had with ever-ready hand lifted these sad heritages of the poor and lowly, came forth to acknowledge a debt which they could in no other wise cancel!

As we endeavour to analyze this man's character, no more fitting place than this will present itself for the inquiry as to what there was in his mental conformation, moral attributes, or social surroundings, which rendered him so remarkable for virtue, and so signally distinguished him for goodness, kindness, and benevolence? It appears to me, upon mature reflection and careful review of the evidence adduced by a long association, that a serious, devout, earnest, and grave nature, was with him congenital, innate. From childhood he was amiable, affectionate, truthful, and sincere. Exposed to depreciatory and malign influences, I do not believe that with inborn traits so pronounced, he would ever have become an entirely vicious man. He would with his native attributes have given an example of a depraved man, who would at his worst give occasional evidences of a tendency to better things. Surrounded as he was throughout his young life by an atmosphere of religion, there were gradually developed in him, as educational outgrowths from his natural qualities, a love of his kind, a strict regard for justice, and a desire to consecrate his life to the moral elevation of society. But one fact, one unquestionable fact, must be borne in mind in studying out the building of this character. Underlying his innate and congenital virtues, beneath his mild, strong, amiable qualities, was a deep religious fervor, which from early youth generated in him a love for his God, and a devout adherence to the duties of a Christian. Buddhism, Mahomedanism, and Pagan philosophy, can all point to good men, to many good men, developed under their doctrines,—Agnew was purely a triumph of christianity. As he once told me, he made early in

his life a resolve to imitate as simply and exactly as he could the example of Jesus Christ. The fruit of his efforts was his beautiful life !

In his case, as in most cases of brilliant success, in any walk in life, the grand result is the outcome of a combination of factors. The first Napoleon was at birth endowed with the mental qualities necessary to a military genius ; he was cradled in an atmosphere of war ; he was developed by the days of blood in which he lived. These the factors ; the result, the greatest captain of the ages. First the soil, then the seed, then favoring circumstances for growth, are all essential in combination for an exceptionally good result. One of these factors might produce an ordinarily good result ; two a better one ; all are needed for a perfect one. To Agnew all were given. It was the under-current of true, sincere, fervid, religious feeling, which combined all for good, and brought forth an exceptional man ; a philanthropist in the truest and best acceptation of the term.

To my mind, he was the most perfect type that I have ever met with of the Puritan ; not as he is seen to-day in his time of prosperity and ease ; but as he appeared in the days of trial and adversity, strong, self-denying, and zealous ; in the days of John Alden and Miles Standish, when first in the Puritan's heart stood his faith.

The men of this grand old religious type have too much that is glorious in tradition, and lustrous in history, to resent the criticism that the excessive swing of its pendulum inclines towards self-righteousness, intolerance, and a tendency to make one's duty towards his God disproportionately great as compared to that towards his neighbor. This danger Agnew seemed to recognize, for he not only resisted it, but constantly and determinedly trampled it under foot. He was a Puritan in his simplicity, which reigned supreme in his house, in his domestic life, in his manners, and in his profession ; in his putting his religion and its duties before all other considerations of life ; in his uncompromising hostility to looseness of morals, of manners, and of conversation ; in his willingness to sacrifice for principle ; in his devotion to the sanctity of the Sabbath, as a day set apart for the service of God. In all these he was a Puritan of genuine and ancient type ; but where the austerity and intolerance of

Puritanism showed itself, there he ceased to follow its deviating and abnormal course.

His mind was wonderfully active, alert, and energetic. He was constantly thinking, and contriving how he could benefit those around him ; even as many active-minded men think and contrive how they may advance their personal interests, and increase their possessions.

For Palisades, the place where was located his country home, he did a great deal of such work as this. A poor settlement contained many goats, upon the milk of which the inhabitants in part subsisted. These were wretched creatures ; as unkempt as their poor owners. To improve the breed of these goats and enhance their value, he imported some beautiful Angora bucks from Kentucky.

The men around the depot appearing to be exposed to bad influences in some objectionable shops; he founded a reading room by subscription, filled it with profitable light literature, and induced them to spend their evenings there.

On one occasion some poor neighbors lost a cow, upon whose milk in great part they relied for support, and a subscription being asked for, to the amazement of the applicant Agnew refused. The bereaved family understood the reason next day, when the empty byre was found occupied by a beautiful Jersey cow selected from his well-known herd.

The negroes of Tappan needed spiritual help. He repaired their church, originally constructed for them by Dr. Torrey, by subscription, and soon developed a Sunday School in connection with it, which grew under the fostering care of his household.

Although these incidents are worthy of mention as being straws upon the current of his life, I fear that by them alone I should fail to hold up faithfully the mirror before this rare and lovely character. Many of us are capable of such acts as these as the results of emotional and spasmodic feelings. The peculiarity of this man was, that they were the rule, not the exception, in his life. Not to have done them, would have surprised everyone who knew him. Doing them, he escaped observation as one does who pursues the even tenor of his way.

I know full well that I shall not weary you who loved him by



fuller recitals illustrative of his character, and without fear of prolixity I shall endeavor to offer some further illustrations of it.

A missionary calling to see me concerning his wife, by the advice of Dr. Agnew, to whom he had come for council about his eyes, from distant lands, told me this story. He had seen the famous oculist five times during a period of as many weeks, and having been cured of the ailment which had caused him to leave his distant charge, had that very day, in much fear and trembling, asked for his bill. The doctor appeared to be pressed for time, and less communicative than usual. He sat down, rapidly wrote a note, put it into a sealed envelope, and handed it to him with the words, "Here is your bill, do not open the envelope until you get home, when you may examine it at your leisure. Good day, Sir." As may be supposed, the poor old divine, trembling for their fate of his meagre purse, no sooner got outside the Doctor's door than he opened the envelope, to learn as quickly as possible the worst. His surprise was great when he found enclosed a check for \$25, drawn to his order; an amount equal to an ordinary charge for the five visits rendered to him. Here was a gift of \$50 to a man of whom Agnew knew nothing, except that he was devoting his life to the good of his kind for a mere pittance in the way of financial return. These little tricks of charity; these practical jokes upon poor old clergymen, impecunious soldiers, and the like, were of common occurrence in Agnew's life, and seemed to be so exceedingly amusing and gratifying to him, that he entered upon the dissipation apparently without counting the cost.

One of our morning journals in commenting upon his life remarked, "Could every eye that Dr. Agnew cured or helped, now shed a tear, what a sea would roll over New York." We may add, could all the gold given away by him in this way, be molten into one mass, what monarch would have a grander monument to mark the spot where his dust lies buried!

Some years ago, I was making a visit at his country place, Hill-Crest, a lovely little farm perched upon the Palisades above the Hudson, like the eyrie of an eagle, enabling the eye to sweep without restraint as far as it can reach over the surrounding country.

A farm three miles distant had just been hired by him as

pasture land, and upon it there stood a large, but dilapidated, old farm-house. His farmer, going to take possession of it, found that it had been for some time occupied by a band of tramps, male and female, whose reckless characters, thievish propensities, and gypsy ways, had rendered them a terror to the farmers for miles around. They had taken possession of the house without authority, paid no rent, and in their daily lives were in the habit of breaking every law of the Decalogue, with the exception only of that against murder, and perpetrating many other crimes not mentioned therein. By most men, the strong arm of the law would have been invoked, and this band of marauders would have been at once ejected; but not so with Agnew. He appeared to think that he had drawn a prize in the social lottery, that God had favored him with an opportunity to civilize and elevate these waifs, whom society all their lives through had treated as Ishmaelites. How well do I remember how his handsome hazel eyes twinkled with pleasure, and his expressive face beamed with fervor, as he laid before me his plan of attack upon this garrison of sin; how loud and defiant his laugh was as I told him that, from my inspection of his disreputable proteges, it would be as easy to make water run up hill as to reform them from their evil habits. To the view of the average man, they certainly looked a most uncanny and unpromising lot!

His mode of procedure was this. He and his family visited these people, cultivated their acquaintance, and by kind words, by sympathy, and by a demonstration of interest, to which these outcasts were as unused as to the ways of honesty and industry, gained their confidence and friendship. Then the Bible, a book of which they had heard, but with which they were entirely unfamiliar, was given to them, read to them, and pressed upon their attention. Their confidence once gained, he put all the able-bodied of the gang at work; the men in building fences, digging ditches, and making roads; the women in preparing clothing for the men. For this work, full wages were paid. Then they were induced to attend a neighboring church, and finally they consented to join its Sunday School and to submit to religious instruction.

For two years this noble experiment went on, then one morn-

ing it was found that the gypsy horde had disappeared as it had come; suddenly, silently, and thanklessly. Where they went, what became of them, what their subsequent destiny, no one knows. The yoke of industry and sobriety had galled their nomadic necks, and folding their tents like the Arabs they had silently stolen away. But, since that time, the fields and gardens of Hill-Crest have been entirely free from their depredations, which had previously been frequent and extensive.

The enterprise, as such noble enterprises often do, had to a very great extent proved a failure. But mark this peculiarity of the generous nature which we are studying; had another horde of tramps succeeded the out-going one within a month, he would have attempted their reformation, with the same fervor and the same faith in the goodness of human nature which had led him on to failure with the first.

One of the most charming features of human character is, beyond question, that charity which leads us to view with leniency the faults of others; which makes us lean towards the doctrine that no man is either entirely good or altogether bad; that we all have dual natures; that we are capable of virtuous as of vicious actions; and which induces us to forgive the evil and encourage the good. No man knew him intimately without according to him this virtue. It was his distinguishing characteristic. "Where sits McGregor," said a zealous and enthusiastic old clansman, "Where sits McGregor, there is the head of the table." Where Agnew took his stand, there stood pre-eminent always, truth, justice, and good-will towards men!

During his daily walks in this city, chance once threw in his way a poor wretch who had become the slave of Alcohol. He was not simply an intemperate man; he was an absolute drunkard, whose wife was left by him almost starving. Thinking that he discovered in him certain faint evidences of a desire for reform, Agnew took him to Hill-Crest, clothed him, gave him comfortable lodgings, and set him to work upon the farm as teamster. For three or four months, the poor fellow braced up, and his blood freed from alcohol, his wife supported by his wages, began to feel himself a man. At the end of that time, he was one evening driving home from the village of Tappan, and had reached the brow of the hill at the top of the avenue

of Hill-Crest, when suddenly he looked across the Hudson and saw lights twinkling in the windows of a drinking den, the terrible joys of which he knew but too well. He stopped and weighed his present and his past in the balance in this wise. In one scale he put comfort, respectability, a wife supported by his labors; in the other, the weird and horrible joy of inebriation. He meditated. An hour later, Agnew, driving from the station, found the horse tied to a tree, and the skiff, which was usually moored at the foot of the cliff, gone. The poor wretch had been in such haste to reach the drinking den, that he could not afford time to take the horse to the stable, which was three hundred yards off. A search for him, found him dead drunk in the den, the seductive lights of which had so suddenly destroyed the labors of months. I saw Agnew the next day, and he told me this story. He was not at all angry with the culprit; pitied, rather than blamed him, and appeared to be by no means despairing as to the prospects of final success. The thought of casting him off, did not appear for an instant to have entered his mind.

Running through this man's character, like a thread of gold which illumines and adorns the texture of velvet, was an undoubted strain of chivalry. At the beginning of our late war, he had a friend who differed with him essentially as to the right of the matter; a man who, having been born and bred in the South and thoroughly imbued with the doctrines of Calhoun, sympathized strongly with his section. Early in the terrible contest, they had long and warm arguments, and it appeared that one of those lamentable ruptures of friendly bonds, which seem inevitable to the course of human life, was about to occur. One night, Agnew called upon his friend and addressed him in these simple and manly words: "Let us agree never again to argue upon the topic which excited us a few days ago. I feel that your position in the matter discussed is an utterly and entirely false and unfortunate one. Indeed, I must frankly tell you that I abhor the sentiments which you hold. Nevertheless, I feel as sure of your sincerity as I do of my own, and I honor your courage in scorning to profess a faith that is not in you. I am acting under the influences which were planted in my mind at my mother's knee; you are doing the same. Let us agree to dis-



agree, and let our friendship remain for the future what it has been in the past."

The Union man and the secessionist clasped hands upon this, and the close of the war found them friends as they were at the beginning.

This story, told in "these piping times of peace," has little significance, but those who recall the stirring days when the roll of the drum and the tramp of armed men sent the hot blood humming through the excited brain, and strung the nerves to the utmost degree of tension, will appreciate the courage and the magnanimity which led the Surgeon-General of the State of New York, the leading spirit of the United States Sanitary Commission, to join hands with an alien in politics, to recognize sincerity in the views of one who boldly opposed him in sentiment, and to render justice to a man whose position was too weak to demand it as a right. How many among us are there who were able then, who are able now, to rise to the sublime height reached by Agnew on that night? If there be one such with us, let us honor him as a man far above the ordinary level of his fellows.

Since that time more than a quarter of a century has elapsed and during it no allusion has ever been made to the occurrence by either man. Whether Agnew ever gave a second thought to it, is doubtful, for such acts were common to his noble life; but I know that to the heart of the other came home the advice of the sage Polonius, "The friends thou hast and their adoption tried, grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel."

Is not my statement, that he was chivalrous, fully sustained by this recital?

Even in our utilitarian days it is only the name, not the essence or the sentiment of chivalry, which is dead. It lives in the life of the young priest, who, foregoing wealth and honor and renown; giving up that greatest of all wealth, conjugal and filial love; delves for a lifetime in the shady walks trodden by the outcasts of society. It lives in the young doctor, who, entirely unprotected, throws himself into a fated city, such as Memphis was of late. It lives wherever generosity, magnanimity and courage combine in a noble trinity in the cause of weakness. It lived in the life of him whose requiem we speak to-night.

I have in my possession the copy of a letter written to Dr. Agnew twelve years after the war by a Confederate officer, whom he met on the field a prisoner after the awful fight at Gettysburgh, and to whom he gave twenty dollars. The soldier writes to thank him, and to ask for his photograph; "that I may," says he, "hang it up in my house, and show it to my children, that they may see the face of a man whose soul could rise above the storm of strife that was pervading the land like a besom of destruction, and administer to the wants of suffering humanity, regardless of party or cause, for Christ's sake."

In reviewing this character one is forced to dwell upon the gentleness, the amiability, and the kindness which marked it, for the reason that these constituted its most prominent and decided attributes. But he who supposes that the stronger, more rugged, and more masculine mental characteristics were wanting in it, is greatly in error. In rebuking pretence and fraud, and in inveighing against wrong, his language would often leave the realms of mere denunciation and enter those of absolute eloquence. Then it was that the wondering listener would learn, that deep down in the very depths of this gentle nature there was its dual part, which feared no man, truckled to no clique or party, and dared to assert itself in spite of dissent, contention, and variance.

He was ever the champion of right. In every cause, he carefully sought out by investigation, by reflection, by inquiry, the exact truth. Having found it, no power on earth could make him swerve. He clung to it undaunted by foe, uninfluenced by friend. He cleaved to it because it was truth. His soul turned to it as the needle to the pole.

There is one character in ancient history to which Agnew's always seemed to me very similar in type, in feature, and in motive; that of Paul of Tarsus,—that typical hero of the Church in the hour of its infancy, and in the day of its sorest need; of that brave son of Judah, who, embodying within his small frame and "weak bodily presence" the warmth and fervor of the valiant race from which he sprung, fascinates to-day the man of the world by his animal courage, as he does the man of God by his moral heroism.

Some years ago, a German publican, who had accumulated

wealth by keeping a drinking saloon upon the eastern shore of the Hudson River and nearly opposite the town of Tappan, determined to build a large dock upon the west shore and to erect there a palatial establishment for the delectation of parties going by excursion steamers from New York, Newburgh, and other riverside cities. The dwellers upon the lovely hills which look down upon the Tappan Zee were in arms, and as usual Agnew was at their front. Crossing the river in a skiff, he called upon the publican, and after a little conversation found that he was enthusiastic for the enterprise and fixed in his intention. Taking his hand, Agnew turned it over, and touching the horny protuberances upon its palm, he said: "It is clear that the wealth which has come to you, has come by pretty hard labor; is it not so?" "Yes," said the man, quite pleased at the implied compliment, "it is so." "Then," said Agnew, rising sternly, and with defiance in his eye, "don't waste your hard-gotten gains by this new enterprise. I pledge myself, and many of my neighbors will do likewise, to resist your proceeding to the very extremity of the law, even if in so doing I sacrifice all that I possess. You shall never carry out your project." Then he went on in a strain of stern and lofty eloquence which struck his hearer a far more telling blow than could have been inflicted by a club. He stood amazed. Was this the gentle, soft-spoken, friendly little man whom he had known for years! What had come over him! Whence the new character with which he had become suddenly clothed! The palatial saloon was never built, and to-day the cedar and the pine wave their green branches, as if in triumph, over the knoll which was to have been its site!

Two physicians in this city, father and son, well-known to the whole profession of medicine as men of intelligence, probity, and skill, obeyed the law of New York in reporting to the Board of Health a case of undoubted small-pox. The Board of Health, not these physicians, sent the patient to Blackwell's Island. Upon her discharge, she sued these physicians, and, wonderful to relate, the jury found in her favor for a large amount. Consider the case for one moment. The law requires a physician to report a case of small-pox to its appointed Board as soon as discovered, and then the law punishes and humiliates the physician for doing its bidding.



The victimized physicians appealed the case, and thus it had dragged its slow length along for seven tedious years, when a verdict in favor of the plaintiff was reached. Then the defendants, by legal advice, determined to pay the judgment and costs. Just at this juncture Agnew called upon them. "You must not," said he, "submit to a wrong which touches not only yourselves, but which establishes an outrageous precedent which will react upon the good of society. Put my name down for \$500 to head a subscription, and I feel sure that the medical profession will see that this unwise and impolitic persecution to which the law has lent itself shall be crushed. His advice was followed and his aid accepted, and now, although the case is still unsettled, there is little doubt about the verdict which will emanate from one of the highest courts of our law.

After thirty years of brilliant professional success, of uninterrupted health, of industry, of frugality, beyond making simple provision for the needs of those immediately dependent upon his labors, he died comparatively poor in this world's goods. Is the reason far to seek? In revealing this I violate no confidence, for this is the climax of his fame, the cap-sheaf of his career, the crowning glory of his life, to which his children point with pride! Had it been otherwise, a want of symmetry would have disturbed the perfect rotundity of his career. As it is, the fair proportions of a beautiful record are left free from blemish and without spot. His income was immense, and he steadily invested it; some will say wisely; for he put it out of reach of moth, of rust, and of thieves. In this course he never hesitated; but from the beginning to the end of his life, pursued it straight onwards, without fear and without reproach; without fear, because of a firm faith that the investment was a sure one; without reproach, because those who were dearest to him went with him hand in hand, never doubting the validity of the evidence given by him who said: "never saw I the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging their bread."

Dr. Agnew leaves to mourn him a widow, seven daughters, and a son. Soon after his death, an intimate friend thus replied in my presence to the question of one, a stranger to this stricken household: "Was Dr. Agnew much beloved in his family?" she asked. "No," replied the friend, "he was not beloved, he was worshipped."

Who would lift the veil which shrouds the sorrow of that simple, devout, and affectionate circle? And yet how much less violent and hopeless their sorrow than the anguish of those who mourn without the sustaining hope of a bright and certain future; of a confident reliance upon a blissful hereafter; of those who feel in their grief, that there's

“ Nought left but weariness, whose dreary tread  
Sounds through the lonely heart, where all lies dead,  
Awakening the echoes of joys that are fled.”

Happy, thrice happy they, who like the afflicted family of our friend, rejoice in the certain hope of a blessed reunion in a land where there shall be no more parting.

In the days of old, men desirous of consecrating their lives to the good of others condemned themselves to the cloister of the monk, or the cell of the hermit, or went forth to battle for the right as soldiers of the cross. This man, with all the cares, the trials and the annoyances of daily life clinging to his steps, has been as devoted as they in striving in the cause of humanity, and has left his impress upon every good work which came within his ken !

The great poet puts into the mouth of Mark Antony, in his eulogium of Cæsar, this sentiment : “ The evil men do lives after them, but the good is oft interred with their bones.” False and ill-considered dictum ! The good deeds which men do live forever, serving as beacon lights to illumine the pathway of imitation for those who follow them. What our colleague has done during his short life-time, is as nothing compared to that which his deeds of kindness, his noble example, and his pure and beautiful record will bring forth in the ages to come.

When the noble hospital founded by his personal efforts shall have fallen into ruin ; when its spacious wards shall have become the dormitories of the night-owl and the bat ; and when the winds shall sweep through its lonely corridors ;—his simple, unostentatious love for his fellow man ; his denial of self in the cause of charity ; his devotion to all that is good and noble ; will live in the minds of men !

The lives of those who, forgetful of personal interests, devote themselves to the good of mankind ; the careers of such beings as John Howard, of Florence Nightingale, and of him whom

we now mourn, are endowed with the wondrous attribute of robbing death of its greatest triumph, and depriving the grave of its power of annihilation.

In his mortal life, Agnew's influence was great ; now that he has put on immortality, it will be an hundredfold greater. Though his mortal part has become dust, the shadow of his spirit will rest upon us, stimulating us to reflection, and inspiring us to action. Though his tongue be still in death, memory will put a tongue into every gentle, loving act of his, which will call upon us to imitate his efforts and to emulate his example. Such a man as Agnew rests from his labors ; he does not die.

“ The pulse-beat of true hearts ;  
The love-light of fond eyes ;—  
When such a man departs,  
’Tis the survivor dies.”

Peace, a long eternity of peace to thee, noble comrade ! Life, a long, enduring life, to the memory which thou has left us as a legacy ! Staunch for truth and justice ; dauntless in the assertion of right ; mild and charitable in judging the faults of others ; loving, forgiving, and gentle towards all ; from thy cold brow, who amongst us would withhold the laurel wreath of fame ; to thy dust, who deny the tears of thy fellows ?

A great orator has said : “ How poor this world would be without its graves, without the memories of its mighty dead. Only the voiceless speak forever.” If this be true, no prouder mound than thy grave will dot our land ; no voice, coming clear and persuasive from the realm of the voiceless, lead us more nobly on than thine !









